

AUTOCRATIC AND PATERNALISTIC TRADITIONS PRE-1918

- 1 Power to legislate lay with the executive.
- 2 Ministers were responsible to the Kaiser.
- 3 Prussia had dominated the empire.
- 4 Prussian militaristic conservatism dominated Germany.
- 5 Socialists and democrats perceived as enemies of the Reich.

BACKGROUND

DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF A DEMOCRATIC CONSTITUTION

STRUCTURE

POLITICAL CHANGES

DIFFICULTIES

IMPLEMENTATION

- 1 Failure to change conservative social structures in: education, judiciary and civil service hampered development of democratic structures.
- 2 Failure to nationalise main utilities and heavy industry — industrialists remained a strong, anti-republican force.
- 3 Army structure remained conservative.

ATTACKS ON THE REPUBLIC

- 1 January 1919, Spartacist attack in Berlin.
- 2 March 1920, Kapp Putsch.
- 3 March-May 1920, communist uprising in the Ruhr.
- 4 September-November 1923, communist uprising in Saxony and Thuringia.
- 5 November 1923, Hitler's attempted Beer-hall Putsch.

CREATION OF THE REPUBLIC

- 1 Defeat led to political unrest.
- 2 Government reforms insufficient.
- 3 Democracy and socialism demanded.
- 4 Workers' and soldiers' councils created.
- 5 Kaiser abdicated.
- 6 SPD leadership declared a republic 9 November.

CONSTRAINTS IN 1918

- 1 Fluid social situation.
- 2 Allied blockade still in place.
- 3 Rapid demobilisation would lead to:
 - i unemployment
 - ii increased social unrest.
- 4 Ebert feared communist revolution.
- 5 Incomplete control exercised by SPD.
- 6 Therefore Ebert agreed to pact with Groener.

MAIN CLAUSES

- 1 Proportional representation.
- 2 Secret, universal suffrage.
- 3 Responsible government.
- 4 Civil rights guaranteed.
- 5 Elected presidency.
- 6 Power of president to suspend civil rights, rule by decree and declare martial law.

CONSTITUTIONAL WEAKNESSES

- 1 Proportional representation led to coalition governments; dangerous at time of major socio-economic reform.
- 2 Increased power of party caucuses led to loss of freedom for Reichstag members.
- 3 Plebiscitary powers open to abuse.
- 4 Powers of president under Article 48 also open to abuse.
- 5 States retained many rights; state conservatives undermined republican power.

PARTIES IN OFFICE

- 1 January 1919 election — SPD largest party; SPD formed a government: Ebert elected president; Schiedemann chancellor.
- 2 June 1919 Schiedemann resigned over Versailles.
- 3 Bauer resigned when army failed to support government over Kapp Putsch.
- 4 Müller, new SPD chancellor, called elections.
- 5 June 1920 SPD, Democrats and Centre lost majority; move to the right. Fehrenbach, of the Centre, new chancellor. DVP included in government.
- 6 May 1921 Wirth replaced Fehrenbach.
- 7 November 1922 Wirth resigned. Cuno, industrialist and 'politician without a party', plus cabinet of experts, installed. Increased conservative slant to government.
- 8 August 1923 Cuno resigned; Stresemann DVP leader, chancellor until November 1923; failed to gain SPD support.
- 9 Marx, Centre Party, chancellor. SPD leave government coalition for first time.
- 10 1924 elections; Luther of Nationalist Party chancellor; another clear shift to the right by voters.
- 11 Ebert died. Hindenburg elected president; democrat replaced by authority figure.
- 12 1928 election; increase in SPD support. Müller SPD chancellor.
- 13 March 1930 Müller resigned. Brüning appointed chancellor by Hindenburg. No further government based on parliamentary majority until the last election in 1933.

OVERVIEW

The following overview (Fig. 2.9) summarises the four major problems faced by the republic that led to its downfall:

